COMPUTERS/HILLEL SEGAL

Sony PC monitor outshines IBM's

The much-raved-about monitors for the IBM PS/2 computers are pale by comparison to the Sony Trinitron Multiscan, Model 1302.

Usually, I don't recommend mixing different brand monitors with IBM computers, but for this Sony monitor, I'll make an exception. The reason is simple: If you try any of the new IBM monitors and the Sony side-by-side, you'll see a big difference.

Not only is the 13-inch Sony monitor larger — it has a bigger viewing area than the same-size IBM PS/2 monitor because it has a smaller border — but it has bigger, crisper characters that are much easier to read.
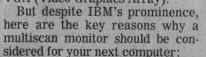
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Another active competitor to IBM's PS/2 monitors is the NEC MultiSynch. But even though it paved the way by introducing a multipurpose monitor several years ago, Sony's dot pitch is finer,

its black is blacker, its background is less reflective, and its colors are richer than the NEC's. So, by doing better than both IBM and its key competitor, Sony has clearly taken the lead in monitors.

To put the Sony and NEC monitors in perspective, one must accept the fact that IBM still sets the standard and produces the monitors against which all others are compared. Indeed, IBM has made many improvements on its previous EGA (Enhanced Graphics Adapter) and CGA (Color Graphics Adapter) color standards, and invented the current standard called VGA (Video Graphics Array).

But despite IBM's prominence, here are the key reasons why a multiscan monitor should be considered for your next computer:

✔ Multiscan monitors, such as the Sony and the NEC, can lock into any horizontal and vertical scan-

ning frequency, from 15 KHz to 35 KHz. These monitors support the VGA resolution of 640 by 480 dots per inch, and also the EGA resolution of 640 by 350 dpi, and the CGA resolution of 640 by 200 dpi. Thus, unlike the IBM monitors, one monitor can be used in all environments.

✔ Where the new VGA monitors really shine is in their rendition of colors. The VGA standard supports up to 256 colors simultaneously, a vast improvement over the 4 or 16 simultaneous colors of previous standards. And, if displaying colors is important to you — as in computer-aided design, manufacturing and engineering applications — you don't want to compromise on quality.

✔ Surprisingly, with higher resolution and more available colors, the main business use of personal computer monitors is still viewing characters — not drawings or diagrams.

The real beneficiaries of the improved monitors are people who use word-processing, spreadsheet

and data base programs. In fact, I found the Sony monitor running the lower resolution EGA to be preferable to IBM's monitors running the higher resolution VGA.

On the down side, the store prices of multiscan monitors like the Sony are $200 to $400 more expensive than the equivalent IBM monitors, remembering, of course, that most new IBM monitors are either EGA or VGA, without the dual capability of the multiscan monitors. The Sony Model 1302 lists for $945 plus $30 for a swivel stand.

The bottom line: If you're in the market for one of IBM's new PS/2 computers, be sure to check out the Sony Monitor in lieu of an IBM monitor. If you compare them side-by-side, I predict you'll end up with the Sony, regardless of the higher cost.

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